

March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011

**From:**

**Robyn Thompson: Private Practice Midwife**

**To:**

**Senate Inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)**

Letter to the Inquiry Committee

Please accept this letter in good faith and I ask that the committee try to comprehend the effect that maternity services legislation and the requirements of AHPRA have on the skilled practice of Midwives as opposed to Obstetric practices that subsume midwife skills to that of obstetric assistants.

**As a member of the Australian Private Midwives Association (APMA) I inform the Senate Inquiry that I am in full support of that submission.**

This letter is one of many, including previous submissions to attempt to help the Labor Government understand the consequences of some of the unreasonable legislation imposed on midwives, particularly midwives who provide in-home services at the request of women. It was believed that these midwives would have had the support required to maintain their professional status to practice midwifery without unnecessary and undignified intervention of the medical profession.

Nicola Roxon, Federal Minister for Health made a verbal promise in the presence of others, during the media release for the Maternity Services Review at Western Hospital, Sunshine Campus. Her promise was that she would not make changes that would remove midwives who provided services in the home out of prudent, proven, established practices. That promise was consequently broken. As a result, I have been forced to close my Midwifery Service because I cannot meet the requirements of 'collaboration' if I follow the decision of women to seek midwifery only services.

No consideration was made for provisional transition of experienced midwives who provided midwifery services in the home, at the request of women for over a quarter of a century. Hence, years of mentoring experience go untapped for future generations of midwives. There was no provision for the continuation of, nor recognition of, midwives and medical practitioners who held respected consultative and referral relationships over these years. Likewise, there was no respect for, or recognition of the trusted and workable system established over 25 years with the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne. The Medical Director of the RWH that time arranged a purposeful and safe avenue for hospital transfer when required, this system flourished in favour of women for 25 years. The Labour Government under the influence of the Australian Medical Association gave no recognition to and has since thwarted that established history.

The women who seek in-home midwifery services rarely want to be involved with a doctor unless necessary. These women continue to deliberately seek midwives as opposed to medical-obstetric services, they accept that a consultation and referral process may be required but they are reluctant to accept the unreasonable requirements of 'collaboration'. Since the forced closure of my Midwifery Service, women continue to call for midwifery services in the home. I will continue to work with some women but I cannot agree to 'collaboration' in the current format. Midwives are professionals in their own right and now they are faced with new unnecessary government legislation that inhibits the practice of their unique professional midwifery skills.

Yours sincerely,  
Robyn